

SHINGLES (HERPES ZOSTER) is a painful skin rash caused by Varicella Zoster, the same virus that causes chickenpox. Once you've had chickenpox, the virus remains in your body in a dormant or inactive stage. If the virus becomes active again you may get shingles. Age, increased stress, and problems with the immune system may increase your chances of getting shingles.

The shingles rash usually occurs on one side of the body, in a line along a nerve pathway. The rash begins as a tingling in the area then forms a cluster of small red spots that often blister. The rash can be painful. Shingles rashes can last 2-4 weeks, but in some people the nerve pain can last for months. For most people, the pain associated with the rash lessens as it heals. Other symptoms of shingles can include fever, headache, chills and upset stomach. In some people, severe complications include pneumonia, blindness, hearing problems, brain inflammation, and even death.

You cannot catch shingles from another person with shingles; however, a person who has never had chicken pox or been vaccinated for chicken pox could get chicken pox from someone with shingles.

Shingles is far more common in people 50 years of age and older. At least 1 million people a year in the United States get shingles.

WHAT IS THE SHINGLES VACCINE?

The shingles vaccine has been proven to reduce the risk of shingles by 50%. The shingles vaccine can also reduce pain in people who still get shingles after being vaccinated.

WHO SHOULD GET THE SHINGLES VACCINE?

A single dose of the shingles vaccine is FDA approved for adults 50 years of age and older and recommended for adults 60 years of age and older.

WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS OF THE SHINGLES VACCINE?

Mild-to-moderate problems: soreness, redness, or swelling where the shot was given and headache.

Severe problems (rare) may include serious allergic reactions with symptoms including: difficulty breathing, wheezing, hives, pale skin, fast heartbeat, dizziness.

REFERENCES

Hamborsky J, Kroger A, Wolfe S, eds. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *Epidemiology and Prevention of Vaccine-Preventable Diseases*. 13th ed. Washington, DC: Public Health Foundation, 2015.

Vaccine Information Statement: *Shingles Vaccine (What You Need to Know)*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). October 6, 2009. <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/vis-statements/shingles.pdf>. Accessed June 2016.